

How to forgive when it seems impossible to forgive

by Danny Lirette

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One of the most difficult things one can do is to ...forgive! It's not an easy task to forgive someone who's offended you and/or hurt you, yet you and I are called by God to forgive others. In fact, the Lord's prayer includes forgiving others (Matthew 6:12). In this prayer, Jesus taught us to pray, "Forgive us.. as we forgive them". In other words, in the measure that we forgive, we'll be forgiven. So how then can we walk in forgiveness? How can we manifest genuine forgiveness when it seems impossible? Here are 7 Biblical principles in forgiving others when it seems like it's not even possible to do so:

1- Ask the Father to forgive you for not forgiving others:

The very first step in forgiving someone who's sinned against you is to seek God's forgiveness for your own sin of not forgiving them. To not immediately forgive someone is a sin and only when we confess and forsake the sin of unforgiveness can we then begin to walk on the path of forgiveness ourselves. Being sinned against is a sin against us; not forgiving our offender is a sin against God and them. Understand that you and I cannot possibly walk in God's blessing and favor if we refuse to forgive those who have sinned against us. In repenting of this - changing our minds and turning from unforgiveness - we will immediately be given grace to forgive.

2- Ask the Father to birth in you an unconditional love for the one who's sinned against you:

The next step in forgiving those you can't in and of yourself forgive is to seek God for a heart of love for the one who has sinned against you. Your own human love isn't sufficient; you must have God's agape love for them. Only the Love of the Father can overcome our hearts of revenge and retaliation and feelings of anger and bitterness. The Holy Spirit will plant within you a heart of unconditional love for those who you once couldn't love! Ask the Lord to love through you and He will; He promises it!

3- Understand that forgiveness is an act of the will...not of your feelings:

We often equate forgiveness with feelings but it's not so! Feelings are not the determining factor of forgiveness; the Cross of Christ is the determining factor! Once we've repented of not forgiving and once we've asked the Lord to birth within us an unconditional love for those who have sinned against us, we can be certain that any and all feelings of anger, bitterness and unforgiveness will begin

to diminish as the Holy Spirit removes those feelings and replaces them with genuine godly love. Don't look to your feelings to determine whether you've forgiven someone; look to the Cross of Christ and to the choice you've made in forgiving them. The feelings of unforgiveness will leave; this I assure you! God's heart and His feelings for those who have sinned against you will replace your own feelings.

4- Meditate on the fact that you've been forgiven by God of greater sin against Him than anyone who's sinned against you:

Understand that no one has sinned against you in word, thought or deed in a greater way than how you've sinned against God in word, thought and deed. Before you came to Christ you were lost and living in sin and it was your sin that crucified the Lamb of God. You have sinned against pure Holiness; no one has sinned against you in such a way as you have sinned against the Lord. When we begin to realize and understand the depth of our own sin against God and the limitless depth of His mercy and forgiveness on our lives, we will then see that it's not only easy to forgive others, but a joy!

5- Understand that sinners sin... and sinners (AND SAINTS!) will sin against you. It's a part of this fallen world:

Sinners sin. Part of sinning is sinning against others in word, thought and deed. It's certainly no excuse; yet it's a definite reality that people will sin against you. Not sinners only; but also godly saints may sin against you. You must come to accept this as part of this fallen world. You must be ready to be the target of others' evil agendas and wicked motives. There will always be someone who will say something and/or do something to offend you... and you must be ready for this! You will never be immune from having plenty of opportunities to become offended and bitter at others; this is a part of life and you need to come to terms with knowing that someone, at some point in time, is going to say and/or do something to offend you. Being in a fallen world with fallen people... we're not going to escape being sinned against. You must be sensitive to the Holy Spirit - and not to sin! - when you're sinned against. If your focus is on Christ and how much you've been forgiven of, it will be much less difficult to forgive others.

6- Release the one you're holding a grudge against from anything they've done or spoken against you and do something wonderful for them:

Forgiveness means releasing the offender from any anger, bitterness, etc, that you've held against them. It means releasing them from any thoughts of vengeance and retaliation. Often, retaliation from Christians comes in the form of division and ignoring others. When you've determined by God's Grace to forgive those who have sinned against you, release them from any thoughts of getting even, ignoring them or talking bad about them. In fact, call them up and invite them out to dinner! Of course this is not possible in all cases, depending on what they did to you, but as a general rule of thumb, it's always appropriate to make a tangible effort to do something to bless the one who's sinned against you. In doing so, you show the heart of God.

7- Repent publicly of any slander, gossip or evil speech against the one who's sinned against you:

This principle applies if you've talked bad about someone else to others. If someone has sinned against you and you've retaliated by going around exposing their sin or talking bad about them, you need to make it right openly and publicly. Confess openly that not only did they sin against you... but you sinned against them! It takes great humility to repent openly and admit you've sinned in your speech against someone else; so repent of pride, humble yourself and openly confess that you've slandered/gossiped about them. If possible, have them present when you do this. It's not always possible or wise, but in a general sense, it is. You show the heart of God when you humble yourself and openly confess that you've also sinned and are now repenting.

Brothers and sisters, forgiveness is not easy and it's actually not even possible without the Holy Spirit working in our hearts to accomplish forgiveness. In applying these principles to your life - from your heart! - you'll see God working in and through you to bring you into a life where no matter what is said or done against you, you will have the heart of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit to forgive and release those who have sinned against you.